

Weickert, Jesco

## Demographic transition in Ethiopia - challenges for the education system and responses

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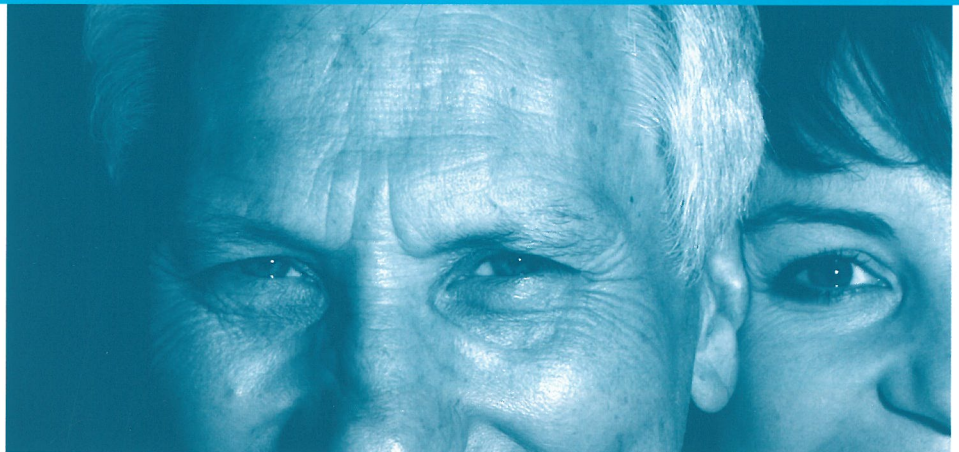
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und Entwicklungspädagogik

Mit: Mitteilungen der DGfE-Kommission  
Vergleichende und Internationale  
Erziehungswissenschaft

1'12

## Demografie und Alter

- Demographic Development in North and South
- Bildung im Dialog der Generationen
- Demographic Transition in Ethiopia
- Kompetenztheoretische Zugänge in der beruflichen Aus- und Weiterbildung mit Älteren
- Globales Lernen und das Lernen der Generationen



WAXMANN

**D**emografische Wandlungsprozesse sind aktuell ein viel diskutiertes Phänomen. Bei einem Blick auf diese Diskurse fällt zunächst das globale Ungleichgewicht der Problemperspektive auf. Trotz der insgesamt wachsenden Weltbevölkerung dominiert in Deutschland eine Debatte, in der die Entwicklung der nördlichen Hemisphäre hin zu einer alternden und schrumpfenden Gesellschaft und die damit verbundenen Herausforderungen für Renten- und Sozialsysteme in den Mittelpunkt gerückt werden. Demgegenüber werden der durch demografische Veränderungen bedingte globale Bevölkerungszuwachs und die Verjüngung der Gesellschaften des globalen Südens eher randständig thematisiert.

Beide Entwicklungen im Norden und im Süden implizieren jeweils Veränderungen hinsichtlich des Umgangs mit alten und jungen Menschen sowie hinsichtlich des intergenerationellen Verhältnisses von Jung und Alt. Das sollte auch eine Perspektive für das Globale Lernen sein.

Mit dem Themenschwerpunkt dieses ZEP-Heftes versuchen wir, demografische Wandlungsprozesse aus beiden globalen Perspektiven zu beleuchten und jeweils die damit implizierten Herausforderungen für Bildungsprozesse herauszuarbeiten. So geht es auf der einen Seite um eine Auseinandersetzung mit Bildungsmöglichkeiten in jungen Gesell-

schaften und auf der anderen Seite um die Auseinandersetzung mit Intergenerationalität im Kontext der entwicklungsbezogenen Bildungsarbeit in Deutschland.

Diesen Perspektiven wollen wir in fünf Beiträgen nachgehen. Zur Einführung wird mit dem Beitrag von *Arne Carlsen* ein systematischer Überblick über demografische Entwicklungen im globalen Norden und Süden gegeben. Aufbauend darauf wird die mit demografischen Prozessen implizierte Frage nach dem Dialog der Generation von *Andreas Kruse* und *Eric Schmitt* in einem Grundsatzartikel ausbuchstabiert. Sie stellen in ihrem Beitrag den Zusammenhang von Mitverantwortung und Generativität ins Zentrum ihrer Überlegungen, die Anregungspotenziale für global verstandene verantwortliche Generationengerechtigkeit bieten.

Die anschließenden Beiträge knüpfen in unterschiedlicher Weise an diese Grundlagen an. Mit dem Beitrag von *Jesco Weickert* wird die demografische Situation Äthiopiens portraitiert, deren Auswirkungen auf Gesundheitsentwicklung, Sicherheit und Bildung reflektiert, und dargestellt, wie mit Bildungsinitiativen auf diese Herausforderungen reagiert wird. *Johanna Gebrande*, *Bernhard Schmidt-Hertha* und *Rudolf Tippelt* setzen sich in ihrem Beitrag mit der Bedeutung von Kompetenzentwicklungsprozessen für ältere Arbeitnehmer auseinander und reflektierten

dies aus einer internationalen Perspektive anhand von Beispielen aus der beruflichen Bildung in Lateinamerika und Indien. Schließlich beschäftigen sich *Annette Scheunpflug* und *Julia Franz* in ihrem Beitrag mit der Verknüpfung Globalen Lernens und intergenerationellen Bildungskonzepten.

Abgerundet wird der Themenschwerpunkt durch ein Portrait des „Senior-Expert-Service“, der globale mit intergenerationellen Bildungsprozessen in einem Mentorensystem verknüpft, sowie mit einer Zusammenstellung ausgewählter weiterführender Literatur zu demografischen Wandlungsprozessen im Süden und Norden.

*Wir wünschen Ihnen eine spannende Lektüre,*

*Julia Franz & Johanna Gebrande;  
Annette Scheunpflug & Rudolf Tippelt*

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Jesco Weickert unter Mitarbeit von Gerhard Quincke

# Demographic Transition in Ethiopia – Challenges for the Education System and Responses

## Zusammenfassung:

Mit diesem Beitrag wird die demografische Entwicklung in Äthiopien und deren Auswirkungen auf unterschiedliche gesellschaftliche Felder, wie zum Beispiel Gesundheit, Sicherheit, Migration, Urbanisierung und Bildung beschrieben. Dabei wird in den Blick genommen, wie die äthiopische Regierung auf die damit verbundenen Herausforderungen im Bereich der Bildung reagiert. Diese Bemühungen werden durch die Darstellung von Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE) anhand des Integrated Women Empowerment Program (IWEP) illustriert.

**Schlüsselworte:** *Äthiopien, demographischer Wandel, Erwachsenenbildung, Alphabetisierung, Schlüsselkompetenzen*

## Abstract:

This article focuses on the state of demographic transition in Ethiopia and describes the current situation of population growth as well as its ramifications in the fields of Maternal Health, HIV/AIDS, Education, Migration and Urbanization, Food Security, Security, and Gender. Approaches to tackle the challenges posed by demographic transition are portrayed featuring the response of the Ethiopian Government. The example used is Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE), implemented through an interdisciplinary and inter-ministerial strategy laid down in the Master Plan for Adult Education. Pilot experience in the field is displayed by the Integrated Women Empowerment Program (IWEP) to present possible changes on the ground.

**Keywords:** *Ethiopia, Demographic Transition, Adult Education, Literacy, Livelihood Skills*

## Introducing: Ethiopia

Ethiopia is deemed to be the cradle of humankind and is looking back to a rich and diverse history. It is one of the two countries on the African continent with no colonial history (beside the brief Italian occupation between 1936 and 1941). Since the civil war which lasted almost twenty years ended in 1991 the country is faced with plenty of domestic and external challenges, the demographic transition amongst the most pressing ones.

According to the Population and Housing Census (PHC) of 2007 Ethiopia's population was 73,918,505 people (Central Statistical Agency 2008, p. 13) and is believed to have significantly exceeded the 80 million mark by the time of printing of this article (National Statistic Agency of Ethiopia, 2011), making it the second most populous country in Africa. The total fertility rate<sup>1</sup> was 5.4<sup>2</sup> 2005 according to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005 (Central Statistical Agency 2006, p. 50), while life expectancy was 50 years (HDR 2011, p.161).

Ethiopia is a country of great ethnic diversity, even though "there is no clear cut differentiation between Ethiopians Nationalities" (Milkias 2011, p. 257). The major groups include Oromo (34.4 %), Amhara (26.9 %), Somalie (6.2 %), Tigray (6.1 %), and Sidama (4.0 %) (PHC 2008, p.16). In Ethiopia more than 80 languages are spoken, belonging to the Semitic, Cushitic, Omotic, and Nilotic language families (Milkias 2011, p. 257).

The principal religions of Ethiopia are Orthodox Christian (43 %), Muslim (33.9 %), Protestant (18.5 %), Traditionalist (2.7 %), and Catholic (0.7 %). Another 0.6 % are distributed among Bahai, Hindu, Yehuda, Jehova, and non-practicing (Central Statistical Agency 2008, p. 17).

Since the independence of Eritrea in 1991 Ethiopia is landlocked, causing additional challenges for economic development (on landlocked and resource scarce countries see Collier 2007, pp. 56–63). Ethiopia ranks 174 out of 187 countries of the Human Development Index<sup>3</sup> with a score of 0.363 (HDR 2011, p. 131). 72.3 % of the population live in severe poverty (ibid. p. 144). Ethiopia has long been the symbol of the food crises in sub-Saharan Africa (Meredith 2006, pp. 331–343). According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO 2011) 41 % of the population are undernourished (figures of 2006–2008).

Nevertheless its economy continues to grow at an outstanding rate (even though taking off from a low level). According to the Economist Intelligence Unit's (EIU) country report on Ethiopia expect the growth of real gross domestic product will reach 8 % in fiscal year 2011/12 (Ethiopia is using the Ge'ez calendar, so the fiscal year ends on July 7th according to the Gregorian Calendar), due to improved agricultural performance. If the development continues growth is to remain above 7 % at least up to 2016 (EIU 2012, p. 3).



## Demographic Transition and Developing Countries

"Many countries' populations go through what is called the "demographic transition," a shift from high fertility and mortality rates to lower mortality, followed by declining fertility and a stable or even shrinking population. In the early stages, when mortality has declined but fertility remains high, populations grow rapidly. As fertility rates decline and populations reach the middle of the transition period, growth continues due to demographic momentum. At the end of the demographic transition, populations are characterized by longer life expectancies and smaller family sizes" (Population Action International 2011, p. 7). In this model populations move through four stages from "Pre-Modern" where there is a balance between birthrate and mortality, "Urbanizing/Industrializing" characterized by a high population growth, "Mature", when the increase in population slows down, and "Post-Industrial", when the populations start shrinking again (Montgomery, n.d.). Demographic transition is caused by a complex set of social determinants such as "parent's altruism, intergenerational transfers, the role of the security system, raising education and health levels, aiding birth control and distinct incentives which govern intra-family choices, technological innovation and human capital accumulation" (Currais, 2000, p. 94).

Leahy et al. classify national populations as very young, youthful, transitional, and mature types "The four current age structure types are created by dividing a country's population into three age groups – youth (ages zero to 29 years), mid-adults (30 to 59 years) and older adults (60 and older) – and using those proportions to track the country's position along the demographic transition" (2007, p. 18). Countries' populations develop along this continuum until they reach the state of relative population stability prevailing in Western Europe and Northern America.

Even though this perspective gives a rather positive outlook on the fact that the world's population still faces a rapid growth and according to UN's Population Fund (UNFPA) has reached 7 billion on Oct. 31, 2011 (p. ii), only fifteen countries are already facing declining population numbers (ibid. pp. 116).

Striking as it seems, the mere growth of population alone does only have a marginal impact on economic development (Bloom, Canning, Sevilla 2003, pp. 17): In addition to the growth of population in between the 'poles of demographic stability', the populace is getting younger in average (ibid. p. 26). States using the so called demographic dividend were able to use the "window of opportunity" (ibid. pp. xii) when the economically active population is relatively numerous in comparison to 'dependents': children and youth in education, and elderly people (ibid. p.30). Though, there is no automatism of a demographic benefit: "Without the right policy environment, countries will be too slow to adapt to their changing age structure and, at best, will miss an opportunity to secure high growth" (Seifu, Habte, Alayu 2011 p. 70). "At worst, where an increase in the working-age population is not matched by increased job opportunities, they will face costly penalties, such as rising unemployment and perhaps also higher crime rates and political instability" (Bloom, Canning, Sevilla 2003, p. 36).

The window of opportunity in sub-Saharan Africa has not opened yet, as fertility rates are still high and in many countries the emerging working-age population is diminished by HIV/AIDS, or as stated in the demographic dividend: "the region has had no demographic dividend to reap" (ibid. p. 61). Yet, one might hopefully add.

## Forms and ramifications of Demographic Transition in Ethiopia

"Ethiopia is a small economy but a demographic Giant [...] with a population doubling time of 27 years" (Seifu, Habte, Alayu 2011, p. 71). While Ethiopian population size was estimated to be around eleven million around the turn of the twentieth century, it is now over 80 million. Using the typology developed by Leahy et al., Ethiopia has a very young populace (Leahy et al. 2007, p. 88), distinguished by a very high proportion of young people and rate of population growth (ibid. p. 23). According to the PHC, 45 % of Ethiopia's population were below 15 years of age in 2007 (p. 16).

## Trends in Population Development

According to the CIA's World Factbook the estimated age median for Ethiopia is 16.8 years (2012), and as the age pyramid in figure 1 shows, the country is far from reaping the demographic dividend, as the ratio between dependents and working-age population is not favourable yet.

Ethiopia is in the second stage of demographic transition ("Urbanizing/Industrializing"), which implies a steep rise in population caused by longer life-expectancies and constant high birthrates. This stage goes hand in hand with improvements in food supply, brought about by higher yields as agricultural practices are improved, and significant improvements in public health that reduce mortality, particularly in childhood (Montgomery, n.d.).

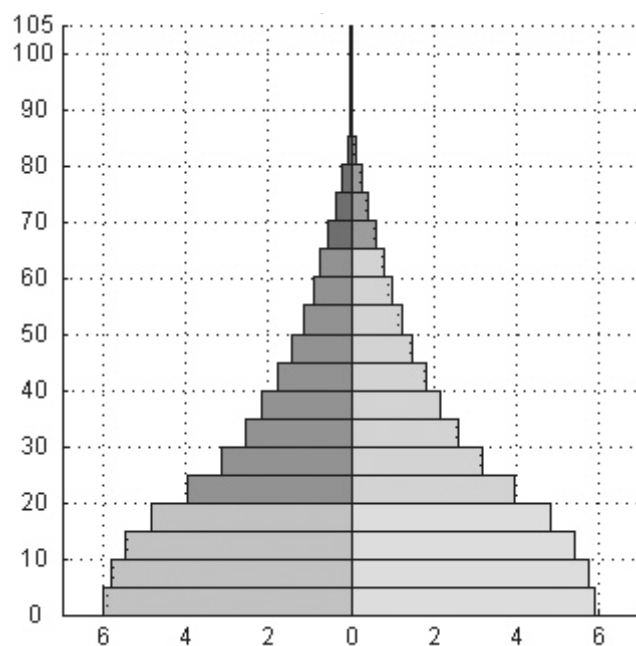


Fig. 1: Age Pyramid of Ethiopia in 2010, figures in millions (United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010)

This is also visible in figure 2: The population in the working age has grown in absolute figures but there is only a minimal change in terms of relation to children and elderly people.

As the breakdown in figure 3 shows, there are significant regional differences in the demographic development of Ethiopia. In urban environments the demographic transition has already progressed as the working age population is significantly higher than in average. This pattern will remain steady at other dimensions of demographic change.

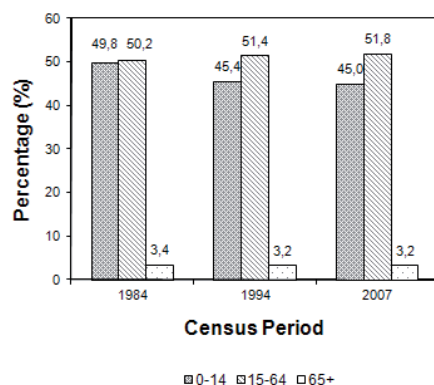


Fig. 2: Percentage Distribution of Population of Ethiopia by Broad Age and Census Period in 2007 (Central Statistical Agency (CSA) 2010, p. 8)

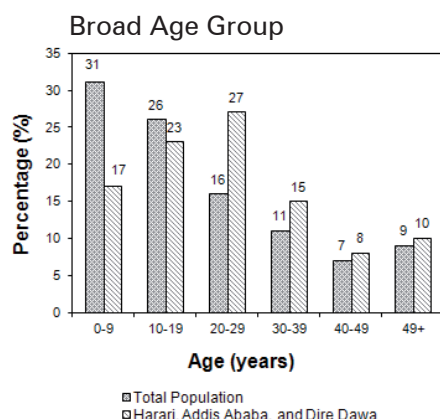


Fig. 3: Age groups and their distribution in 2007 (Central Statistical Agency, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, International Food Policy Research Institute 2010, p. 17)

Even though the fertility rate in Ethiopia has dropped to 5.4 from 6.4 reported in 1990 according to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2005 (EDHS 2006, p. 50), still huge regional differences between various parts of the country and between urban and rural environments have been reported. According to the EDHS the Total Fertility Rate was 2.4 in an urban environment and 6.0 in rural areas (p. 47). Beside the strong regional differences, the impact of education on the fertility rate is striking (see figure 4).

In the model of demographic transition briefly described above, falling mortality rates should lead to a cultural shift towards smaller fami-

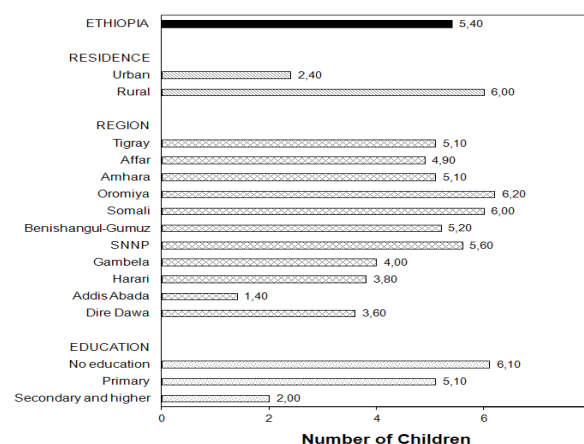


Fig. 4: Total Fertility Rates by Background Characteristics (ibid.)

lies. The reasons for the prevailing high fertility rates in some areas can be explained by cultural patterns as well as and the availability of family planning, also in urban areas, education is more available. As figure 5 shows, in 2005 in most areas people still desire large family sizes, even in Addis Ababa the desired number of children is higher than the actual fertility rate. It can be noted, that the cultural pattern preceding the possible demographic dividend is far from being reached yet. Instead of having less children and investing in their education, the prevailing strategy (in some areas to a frightening extend), is to seek 'safety in numbers' and to ideally have 4.5 (women), respectively 5.2 (men) children.

"Acquiring knowledge about family planning is an important step towards gaining access to and using a suitable contraceptive method in a timely and effective manner. Individuals who have adequate information about the available methods of contraception are better able to make choices about planning their families" (ibid. p. 98). Beside the attitude on the number of own children, the ability to determine the size of the own family is crucial and making awareness of and the ability to access contraceptives necessary.

The general knowledge of contraceptives is high in Ethiopia, ranging around 90 % for various status-groups (ibid.). If it comes to its usage the figures are severely different, according to the EHDS 2005 only 10.3 % of all women use contraceptives. Also in this exists a strong difference between urban and rural settings, prevalence in Addis Ababa is 57 % while it is only

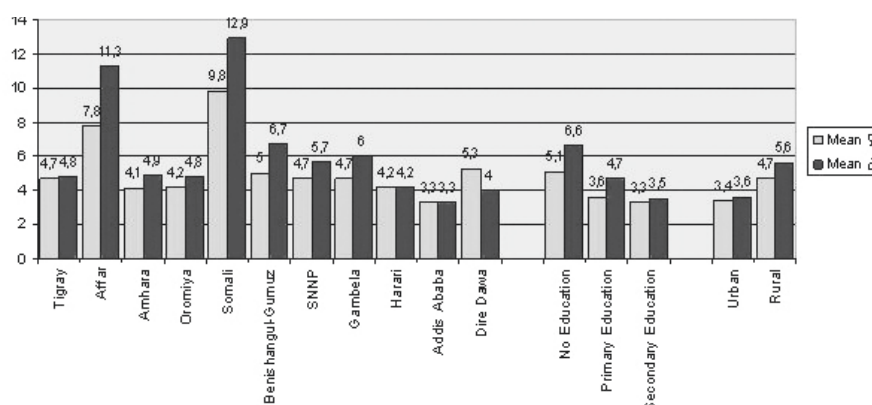


Fig. 5: Mean ideal number of children (ibid. p. 98, authors graph)

3 % in the Somali region (ibid. p. 62). Also it is worth noting, that the EHDS 2005 identifies a large unmet need for family planning in Ethiopia (p. 95). A hopeful development is that over 60 % of unmarried sexual active women use contraceptives (ibid.) and a shift of attitude might be coming forth. Even though the willingness and ability to decide on smaller family sizes is determined by a complex set of available resources and cultural patterns, the efforts of the Government of Ethiopia and the international community might bear fruit in the future.

In terms of demographic transition, the Ethiopian the fertility rate is already slowly declining and especially in urban areas the trend towards limiting the number of children has progressed. Still as the figures from rural areas clearly display, Ethiopia is still a long way from a stable population.

### Ramifications of Demographic Transition

In its publication “Why population matters”, the NGO Population Action describes the effects of population growth on several development issues (2011). Subsequently, seven major consequences of demographic transition in Ethiopia are highlighted:

- **Maternal Health**

Despite being addressed as a Millennium Development Goal, Maternal Health is still a pressing issue: “Globally, more than 500,000 women die each year because of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. Almost half of these women are in sub-Saharan Africa. But the 0.1 per cent annual rate of reduction in this region, where the problem is most acute, is slower than in any other region” (UNICEF 2008, p. 2).

Even though the main reason for the high maternal mortality is the lack of medical care services of all sorts (ibid. pp. 7), naturally with multiple births the risk raises for each individual parturient and limiting the number of births also reduces pregnancy related deaths (Marston, Cleland 2004, p. 5).

In Ethiopia the Maternal Mortality ratio is 470 (maternal deaths per 100 000 life births, HDR 2011, p. 142), while the lifetime risk of maternal death<sup>4</sup> is 40 (UNICEF, n.d.). Even though the EHDS 2005 indicates a decline of maternal mortality, an in-depth-analysis indicates stable or even raising figures (Abdella 2010, pp. 115–122). For comparison, the Maternal Mortality Ratio are 430 for Uganda and 530 for Kenya (HDR 2011, pp. 139–142).

- **HIV/AIDS**

Demographic transition has a strong relationship to the spread of infectious diseases and HIV/AIDS: Growing urbanization and migration (see below) are fuelled by high birth-rates and foster environments like slums where infectious diseases can flourish. Especially HIV/AIDS also limits the positive aspects of demographic transition as mainly people in working age fall victim to it (Population Action 2011, p. 18).

In 2010 it is estimated, that between 1.4 and 2.8 % of Ethiopian adults between 15 and 49 years of age are infected with HIV (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HPCO) 2010, p. 6), again with strong regional differences. Despite the relatively low prevalence-rate (for example in neighbouring Kenya the rate is 6.3 % of the

same age group (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) 2010, p. 214), Ethiopia is one of the countries with highest absolute number (1.1 million) of people living with HIV/AIDS (HPCO 2010, p. 6).

The rate of HIV prevalence is mostly stable, while it is indicated, that the rate declines in urban environments (possible due to better access to information and contraceptives), while it is rising in rural areas (ibid. p. 7), also due to the Ethiopian Government’s Efforts “containing the epidemic and mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS through an intensified national response in a comprehensive and accelerated manner” (ibid. p. 27).

- **Education and Training**

As described above, falling birth-rates can lead to a window of opportunity, when young people can get a more intense education and the labour market benefits from a large number of a qualified workforce in comparison to dependents. As Ethiopia is still in the early stages of the demographic transition and population growth still high, its school system is not able to provide education for all.

“In Ethiopia, the reduction in the number of out-of-school children from 6.5 million in 1999 to 2.7 million in 2008 was achieved largely through an increase in the grade 1 gross intake rate, which reached 153 % in 2008” (UNICEF: Global Monitoring Report (GMR) 2011, p. 48). It has been widely noted, that the indicator to measure the second Millennium Development Goal focusing on the enrolment rate at primary level, lead to an overemphasis of government spending on bringing children into school and in turn to the relative neglect of other educational areas. Still Ethiopia’s achievements are impressive, its net enrolment ratio increased to 79 % in 2008 from 37 % in 1999 due to increased spending on education (ibid. p. 106), even though it led to a decline in the school survival rate (ibid. p. 49).

Still Ethiopia has the 6th largest population of illiterate people worldwide, more than 30 million people cannot read or write, the national literacy rate being 36 %, 50 % for men and 23 % for women respectively (ibid. p. 280). Once more the regional differences are enormous as figure 6 clearly displays:

So far, the country has been trying to respond to the growing social need for education and training by a massive expansion of the system at all levels. Yet, the costs are difficult to be met especially when it comes to quality. “Quality Education for All” is therefore – not surprisingly – a main motto of the 4th Education Sector Development Program (ESDP IV). The competency levels of most school leavers are still too low to make them competitive and fit enough for the work of work and/or to become change agents. Another challenge is the absorption-capacity of the labour market in the formal sector of the economy. In spite of the impressive economic growth rates over the last few years and massive investments in the general infrastructure of the country, there is still a lack of decent workplaces and most leavers of the education system have to struggle employing themselves of looking for perspectives in the informal sector: “Other than the fast population growth, the inability of the economy to generate sufficient employment opportunities and low productivity, low skills of the working poor,



including those operating in small holder agriculture and the informal economy contributes to the high incidence of poverty and ever increasing unemployment problems” (Federal Republic of Ethiopia, International Labour Organization 2009, p. 2). In the rural areas, smallholder farming systems prevail. The increase of the population leads to a steady process of partition of areas, which do not really allow for efficient production and sustainable levels of income. A strive into the urban areas is foreseeable. The private sector absorbs graduates of the education and training system at an increasing pace, yet the demand for skilled labour and educated graduated in the economy does not develop in line with the social demand of the increasing number of leavers of the primary, secondary and tertiary education system. Quality-leavers are in demand, but in limited numbers only and the high competition impacts on the salaries. Not surprisingly, many Ethiopians look for greener pastures abroad – with the high number of young women working (or applying to work) as house maids in the countries of the middle east being the most visible phenomena.

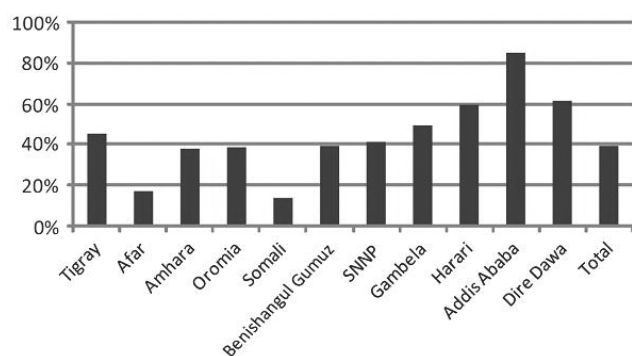


Fig. 6: Literacy Rates by Region (Central Statistical Agency, Ethiopian Development Research Institute, International Food Policy Research Institute, 2007, p. 26)

#### • Migration and Urbanization

As high birth-rates strain families' resources, they result in people migrating into urban areas or abroad to find better living (Population Action 2011, pp. 30–34). The outcomes of this tendency is ambiguous, on the one hand, urbanisation can lead to more hazardous living conditions as shown on the example of HIV/AIDS, on the other hand in urban contexts the demographic transition tends to speed up as can be seen in the chapters above (Assefa, Aduugna 2011, p. 146).

The figure of international migration of Ethiopian people is disputed, while the CIA Factbook lists a minor negative migration (2012), Aaron Matteo Terrazas in an article at Migration Information source, quotes the Ethiopian migration expert Tassé Abye “In less than 30 years, Ethiopian immigration, born of a conjunctural crisis situation, has become a structural immigration” (Terrazas 2007). Still the amount of remittances sent to Ethiopia (0.9 % of GDP in 2009) is comparatively low in comparison to other developing countries (HDR 2011, p. 164), indicating a relatively small number of people actually left the country.

Within Ethiopia 12.2 million people are migrants according to the Atlas of the 2007 Census (Central Statistical Agency, Ethiopian Development Research Institute Inter-

national Food Policy Research Institute 2010, p. 27), defined as people having moved from one *woreda*<sup>5</sup> to another in their lifetime, most of which (46.9 %) move from one rural area to another, while 26.7 % move to settle in an urban environment (ibid. p. 31). Ethiopia is still a mainly agricultural country, as only 16.1 % of the total population are residents of urban areas (PHC 2008, p. 17).

#### • Food Security

“Most of the countries with the highest numbers of people facing food insecurity also have high fertility rates and rapid population growth. [...] Food production depends on croplands and water supply, which are under strain as human populations increase. Pressure on limited land resources, driven in part by population growth, can mean expansion of cropland” (Population Action 2011, p. 43).

Food security in Ethiopia has been an ongoing issue since the fifteenth century with a famine happening each decade as research of Richard Pankhurst ascertains (1985, p. 26). In European media and the public consciousness, Ethiopia is the synonym of starvation in developing countries, with frequent famines occurring in the twentieth century at the same rate as described by Pankhurst (Meredith 2006, pp. 331–343). It is important to note though, that the direct link between population growth and food scarcity is subject to an ongoing academic debate. As it is not possible to retrace all arguments, just some of the critical concerns shall be highlighted:

According to Bloom, Canning, and Sevilla famines “have occurred were largely caused by poverty and lack of funds within a section of the population to buy food rather than by any absolute shortage of food” (2003, p. 15). Also the World Food Organization (FAO) in its latest report on Food Insecurity in the World (2011) states, that “a food-security strategy that relies on a combination of increased productivity in agriculture, greater policy predictability and general openness to trade will be more effective than other strategies” (p. 26), while population growth is not treated as a separate issue.

It might be concluded, that if the population is able to afford its food demands and the government being able to provide food supply then the system is capable of dealing with a growing population, whereas if the system is off balance, rising population figures put natural resources under additional strain:

According to the CIA Factbook, only 10.01 % of Ethiopia's land is arable and a mere 0.65 % are suitable for permanent crops. The Human Development Report states that 72.3 % of Ethiopia's population were living on degraded land in 2005 (HDR 2011, p. 153). Even though Ethiopia is amongst the countries expected to meet the sub-target of the first Millenium Development Goal halving, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger, the absolute figures are still high. According to the World Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), 1990–92 69 % of the population of Ethiopia suffered from undernourishment, the rate went down to 41 % for the period between 2006–2008 (FAO 2011, p. 44). As the recent draught and rising food-prices showed plainly food security is and will remain precarious in Ethiopia for the future.

- **Security**  
“In the 1990s alone, countries with a very young age structure were more than three times likely to experience conflict than countries with a mature age structure” (Leahy et al. 2007, p. 20). “Large numbers of young people in a population, when coupled with socioeconomic problems, can leave individuals more susceptible for recruitment into insurgencies” (Population Action 2011, p. 37).

Even though one should be careful utilizing simple explanations in complex settings, the melange of challenges posed by the demographic transition described above, can surely contribute to instability in any given society. Even though Ethiopia is involved in several internal and external conflicts, an in-depth analysis would be necessary to determine the role of a very young age structure in the development of each of these.

One indicator that will be used instead is the crime rate, even though it is generally agreed, that most violent and property crimes are committed in the age group from 13 and 25 (Kendall 2011, p. 201), so the crime-rate will naturally be higher in a youthful society. In order to get really comparative results it would be necessary to statistically eliminate the age-effect. The Intentional homicide rate<sup>6</sup> in Ethiopia was 25.5 % in 2008, while in Kenya it was slightly lower with 20.1 % (UNODC 2011, pp. 92–96). Due to missing data, it is not possible to determine a trend yet.

Another indicator which might be used is domestic violence, in 2002 49 % of Ethiopian women experienced physical violence in their lifetime and 59 % experienced sexual violence by an intimate partner (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010, p. 223). Asked if it is justified if a husband beats his wife after she burned the food, in Ethiopia 61 % of the women considered it justified, while the rate was only 16 % for Kenya (ibid. p. 227).

- **Gender**  
Gender has a strong influence on how the results of demographic transition are experienced, in most of the areas described above; women have to carry far more than their fair share of the demographic burden. The Human Rights Council of the United Nations even addressed high maternal mortality as a human rights issue (2009), the HIV prevalence rate of women is twice the one for men (1.9 vs. 0.9) (Central Statistical Agency 2006, p. 216), the literacy rate for women in Ethiopia is 23 % while it is 50 % for men (GMR 2011, p. 280).

As it has been shown, the consequences of having a very young age structure are severe for Ethiopia. Once the window of opportunity opens, it will provide plenty of prospects for the country, but for the time being, the high population growth just makes government structures, might it be education or health, choke under the high numbers of people in need.

What the figures also display are large differences to countries with a mature age structure, and probably not quite unexpected. Still there are some notable differences to other developing countries in the region, e.g. if it comes to HIV or domestic violence. Demographic transition has its unique characteristics for each country (and region, gender, social group, etc.) and measures to address these have to be custom fit accordingly.

## **Education-led responses to the demographic challenge**

The first population policy of Ethiopia was established in 1993 but did not achieve greater impact (Seifu, Habte, Alayu 2011, p. 72). The Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to end Poverty (PASDEP) 2005/06–2009/10 featured a pillar on Population growth. The current Growth and Transformation Plan 2010/11–2015/16 (GTP) incorporates population as cross cutting issue, aiming on laying “the foundation for harmonizing the rate of population growth with the country’s capacity to develop and use natural resources, and so improve the overall living conditions of citizens” (2010, p. 116) The main mechanism for implementation is family planning, while positive contributions by other sectors as education are stated.

### **Recent approaches of the Government of Ethiopia**

The GTP is underpinned by sectoral plans with the 4th Education Sector Development Program (ESDP IV) being the reference document.

In order to catch up to the level of the MDG, and to reach the ambitious targets of the GTP and to respond to the needs of its young and still growing population, Ethiopia is undergoing a structural reform of almost all components of its educational system incl. a TVET sector reform and the massive expansion of higher education. Recognizing the fact that with a population, where almost 70 % of the population over 15 years of age (which is the ESDP IV’s definition of “adults”), the GTP goals cannot be reached, the Government of Ethiopia has also declared adult education, (“Integrated Functional Adult Education”) a priority. With the National Adult Education Strategy (since 2008) and a Master plan for Adult Education, which is part of ESDP IV (since 2010), the country created a strategic framework for this sub-sector. The practical approach is functional, geared to the specific needs observed in the respective constituencies of the adult learners and combines the provision of

- literacy and numeracy skills;
- life skills, awareness on issues related to health, family planning, environmental protection;
- elements of civic education for the development of the constituencies of the learners;
- vocational skills geared towards improved livelihoods and adding value to local resources;
- business skills to handle gainful occupations, micro credits and participate in economic life.

ESDP IV has a strong focus on primary education (not the least due to the prominence of the MDG) yet, the quality of the delivery in the General Education System is still insufficient thus leaving youths and adults behind who are in need of access to further opportunities to catch up on education, skills and tools to improve their livelihoods. Considering the increasingly prominent paradigm of lifelong learning, IFAE (in conjunction with a boost in skills training and small and micro enterprise development initiatives, under the umbrella of the newly established TVET agency), the GoE tries to provide adequate learning opportunities for the majority of uneducated and unskilled Ethiopians.

The target for 2014/15 is an enrolment rate of 95 % functional adult literacy (GTP 2010, p. 89). ESDP IV envisa-

ges to allocate 8.8 % of the educational budget for Integrated Functional Adult Education (IFAE<sup>7</sup>). The Master Plan for Adult Education in Ethiopia 2010–2020 with its regional chapters offers a blueprint for the implementation of IFAE. The Master plan is a comprehensive plan aiming to “improve the reach, access, quality of adult education, with a focus on functional adult literacy” (Master Plan 2010, Summary, p. 3) and eliminating illiteracy by 2020. The actual plan is based on a detailed set of socio-demographic data and the availability of facilities on the regional level.

While it is clear that such ambitious targets are difficult to be put into practice especially as what the financing and the management of a system is concerned, which builds on the pooling of funds, infrastructural facilities and resource persons from all sectors and ministries, there is good hope for progress: Integrated, functional approaches have been successfully field-tested in the country since years (see next chapter).

### Experience with holistic responses

Faced with the alarmingly huge number of persons over 15, who are illiterate, semi-literate and un- or at best semi-skilled, *dvv international*, which is a technical partner of Ethiopia's Ministry of Education since 1995, has been instrumental in the elaboration of the National Adult Education Strategy (NAES) and the Master Plan for Adult Education. With the assistance of the Federal German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Royal Netherlands Embassy, which funded a pilot program directed to illiterate women, integrated, cross-sectorial approaches could be field tested in “model” woredas. Around 40 “model woredas” – at least one in a region – and some of them operational since almost three years are earmarked to demonstrate in the course of the further pursuit of ESDP IV, how integrated functional adult education can work. Further scaling up is envisaged through a capacity development approach which includes exchange between model woredas and others and a gradual adaptation of the model elsewhere. Implementing the NAES, all the eleven Regions of Ethiopia are currently working on that – one regional has already made the political decision to implement the integrated approach described here in all its woredas. The Minister of Education himself has recently invited all the Regional Presidents and high ranking officials of all line ministries with stakes in IFAE (Agriculture, Health, Labor and Social Affairs, Women, Youth and Children affairs) and urged them to implement IFAE as a key element of ESDP IV.

### The response applied in the Integrated Women's Empowerment Program

As part of the bilateral agreement with the Government of Ethiopia, *dvv international* implements the Integrated Women's Empowerment Program (IWEP), funded by the Dutch Government. IWEP aims at reaching 31 000 women across Ethiopia with a three pronged approach combining literacy, skills training and entrepreneurship support. The concept of integrated, functional adult education (IFAE) took up many lessons learnt during the implementation from 2006 to 2012. IWEP formed learning circles of marginalized women using either the REFLECT<sup>8</sup> approach or FAL. They are receiving a mixed set of training to develop their literacy and numeracy skills,

their life skills, which relate to basic skills such as problem solving, hygiene and sanitation, etc., technical/vocational skills, and business skills.

The program also features an income generating component, as the women are supported in developing skills in agriculture or crafts, a micro-savings-scheme allows them to use these either for an individual or collective business activity. Acquired skills are applied directly e.g. by needing a proper book-keeping for the savings scheme. At local level the program brings together all those concerned with the matters described above in order to align the different pillars of activities, e.g. to determine the most promising business venture and tailoring the vocational training according to it<sup>9</sup>.

The circle is supported for two years at last, meeting between two and four times a week.

The integrated, livelihood-oriented approach applied by the IWEP offers the unique opportunity to address several issues of demographic transition:

- Family planning and health matters are directly addressed with the circles
- The level of education of the women rises thus being an indirect prerequisite for a lower birthrate
- The income of the women rises by the utilizing the credit scheme also influencing an indicator correlating with lower birthrates
- As the circles are embedded in the local communities in can unfold significant cultural shifts for example in terms of under-age marriages

The approach also pays attention takes account of the fact, that literacy alone does not have a developmental value in itself: “Our experience shows clearly that adult education and local development can often be effected without literacy skills and that the need for literacy may only arise during or even after the performance of activities by a given community or the society at large” (Hinzen, Horn, Leumer, Niemann 1988, p. 147). Literacy might be a human right and a necessity for participation, still in order to start educational processes clear incentives for the participants are necessary.

The results of IWEP have been impressive, almost 30,000 women participated in 6 regions by spring 2012 and the participants report improved domestic status and stronger participation in decision making at home. The pay-back rate of micro-funds is more than 90 %, indicating a successful implementation of the income generating activities. Moreover, capacities at local levels in terms of infrastructure and know-how have been strengthened so the prospects for sustainability and increasing outreach are promising. Since the decision-makers at federal and regional level appreciate the benefits, the integrated approach is now implemented across all eleven regions in 43 woredas. As all those woredas are still considered “model” areas, a further outreach into the close to 1,000 Woredas of the country is desired – provided the Government can mobilize the necessary resources.

In 2011 in the publication “Faces behind our Work” IWEP documented the stories of sixteen women engaged in the program. Birka Wabe from Oromia tells her story:

*“All my life I stayed in the rural area. Now I am around 60 years old and I have 6 children, 4 boys and 2 girls. When I was*



20, my family arranged a traditional exchange marriage. I was sent to this 15-year-old man and my father married his sister instead. My husband was already married at that time and later he married a third woman, the former wife of his brother. His first wife died meanwhile. He got another 2 children with his third wife. I refused to get more children, even though my husband wanted to get more. [...] Since 2010 I have been learning to read and write in the IWEP programme.

Our group also participates in the skills training. We were asked to choose between three income generating activities, which are sheep fattening, poultry and traditional handicraft. I have chosen traditional handicrafts. I can sell one Irbo (traditional basket) for 35 Birr, while the raw material costs 12 Birr. In one month I can complete two Irbos and earn about 46 Birr from it.

We discuss a lot of issues like consequences of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) or polygamy. Even through Sharia law the Islam community tries to reduce polygamy in our region. And change can slowly be observed in our community. I am also not willing to marry my daughter against her will. When I was six years old, I got circumcised like all the other girls at that time. However, I did not circumcise my daughters, because of my own experience and because of what I have learned about it. Also family planning is being discussed now in the family. And my husband supports me in continuing the IWEP programme” (ibid. pp. 12–13).

Even though this is just one statement it clearly indicates the potential of IFAE despite adverse economic and cultural conditions.

## Prospects

According to the *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*, the Population of Ethiopia will pass the 100 million mark before 2020 and will be above 150 million between 2055 and 2060 (United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010, medium variant). As it has been displayed above, population growth puts Ethiopia and its government under severe pressure.

Considering the enormous number of persons who have to be reached and educated in Ethiopia, which starts from the level of a 70 % adult illiteracy rate, and considering the reality of a multi-faceted country with eleven different and increasingly independent regional states under the coordination of a federal government, the question of building a self-sustainable education system, which responds to the needs, the resource base and the respective development opportunities becomes more and more essential. Ethiopia has prepared adequate strategies and mechanisms for cross-sectorial, multi-stakeholder governance of the educational system at federal level as well as in the regions – the challenge is now to make them work and take the relevant aspects of demographic transition into account. An appropriate consideration of gender-related issues will be of paramount importance to reach this aim. Whereas most adult learners in Ethiopia are female – and they still carry the main burden in the area of reproductive health – only a limited number of female adult educators is available. The training and the upgrading of adult educators, the promotion of literate environments, so that the learners can continuously use their newly acquired knowledge and skills will be one of the key areas, where dvv international will focus its technical partnership with Ethiopia at local, regional and federal level.

With the Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) approach, which is an underlying concept to the overarching development plan GTP, the Ethiopian government aims on becoming a mid-income country by 2025 with “an overall target of at least 8.1 % growth in agriculture between 2011 and 2015” (Tran 2011). Even though it is mainly focussed on raising agricultural production, in the long run growing standards of living and educational levels will lead to a more favourable demographic balance and enable the state to reap the demographic dividend. The ratio of working age population to dependents (aged 0–14 and 65+) was 100/81.2 in 2010 and is projected to be down to 100/42.9 in 2050 (United Nations Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010, Medium Variant) offering good opportunities for economic development and an improved standard of living.

The educational sector and adult education in particular, play a pivotal role in this process, as “the demographic transition has significant effects on investments in human capital, effects which are the least tangible, but may be the most significant and far-reaching” (Bloom, Canning, Sevilla 2003, p. 41). Adult Education, especially when understood as lifelong learning and implemented in an integrated and functional way as described above, can be one factor to overcome the challenges posed by demographic transition. As the example of Birka Wabe has shown, demographic transition and modernization are not static and have an immediate impact on people’s everyday life. Adult education can help people to shape their surrounding and deal with social change in order to bring about greater participation and enhance individual discretion.

## Notes:

- 1 Total fertility rate: Number of children that would be born to each woman if she were to live to the end of her child-bearing years and bear children at each age in accordance with prevailing age-specific fertility rates.
- 2 The Human Development Report projects a total fertility rate of 3.9 for 2011 (p. 142), but as the EDHS offers a detailed breakdown of demographic indicators and is based on a survey its figures will be used throughout this article.
- 3 The Human Development Index is an elaborated indicator compiled of life-expectancy, several educational indicators and Gross National Income (GNI). It was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme. It “can be considered as a first and important step toward incorporating broad notions of sustainability into measures of development” (Sagar/Najam 1998, p. 250) and moving on from the singular scope on the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- 4 Probability that a woman will die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth over her lifetime
- 5 Woreda is the Ethiopian administrative unit on the local level.
- 6 “Number of unlawful deaths purposefully inflicted on a person by another person per 100.000 inhabitants” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2011, p. 10.
- 7 “In general terms, FAL builds on indigenous knowledge and seeks to link writing, reading and numeracy skills to livelihoods and skills training in areas such as agriculture (including off-farm activities), health, civics, cultural education, etc.” (dvv international / Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 11). It integrates a micro-finance scheme in order to use the acquired skills for income generating activities (details see below).
- 8 Reflect is a participatory method for adult education. “Reflect provides an ongoing democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant to them. The participants choose the topics themselves, according to their own priorities and supported by a local facilitator” (Reflect Action, 2009). The main difference to FAL methodology, is that the latter is rather oriented on a traditional training setup.
- 9 For a detailed description of the program refer to dvv international/Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2011.



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